

SPEECH

OF

HON. LEWIS CASS, OF MICHIGAN,

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, FRIDAY, JANUARY 4, 1850,

On Suspending our Diplomatic Relations with Austria.

The Senate proceeded to the consideration of the following resolution, submitted on the 24th ult. by Mr. CASS:

Resolved, That the Committee on Foreign Relations be instructed to inquire into the expediency of suspending diplomatic relations with Austria.

The resolution having been read—

Mr. CASS rose, and addressed the Senate as follows:

Mr. PRESIDENT: I do not know that this resolution will be opposed. It is one of inquiry only, not of action. But as I should not have introduced it, had I not intended to ask the opinion of the Senate upon the subject, whatever may be the report of the Committee on Foreign Relations, and as the measure is not an usual one, I deem it proper briefly to state the reasons which have induced me to propose it.

The intercourse subsisting between the independent nations of the world, where not regulated by special conventional arrangements, is regulated by each for itself, subject to the established principles of the law of nations. The great improvement in the mechanical arts, and the general progress of the age, united to that spirit of enterprise, commercial and scientific, which was never more active in itself nor more usefully employed than now, have given increased energy to this intercourse, and, having in effect broken down the barriers of space which separated nations, have opened each to the knowledge and business of all.

This general intercommunication, especially among the nations of Christendom, creates a community of interest, and, in some measure, of feeling, which becomes a bond, however slight, uniting them together into one political family. The internal agitations or external dangers which threaten one cannot be indifferent to the other members of this wide-spread community. The age is an inquiring and an observing one; and the facility and rapidity of communication, among the proudest triumphs of human knowledge, come powerfully in aid of this disposition to judge and approve or censure passing events, as their character and circumstances may justify. This public opinion, embodied by the press in the daily journals it pours forth, is borne through the civilized world, pronouncing the judgment of the present day, and anticipating that of posterity. There are none so high as to be beyond its censure—none so low as not to be encouraged by its approbation. The frontiers of a country may be armed at its approach. But it will pass them. It may be checked, but it cannot be stopped. It is stronger than the bayonet—more vigilant than the suspicions of despotism.

The diplomatic relations subsisting between two countries are maintained only by political agents, such as ambassadors, ministers, or chargés, reciprocally sent for that purpose. At the commencement of this Government we had but few of these functionaries, and those we had were confined to the principal European courts. They have been gradually increased in number, till twenty-seven of them are authorized by the statute book to be employed. Still there are important countries, even in Europe, where no American representative has ever been sent, and others, among which is Austria, where they have been sent but recently. In some cases, (and indeed they are not few,) this interchange of diplomatic agents is rather a matter of courtesy than of positive utility, either commercial or political. After a treaty of commerce is formed, or after it is ascertained that a satisfactory one cannot be formed, the relations between us and some of these countries would go on, as indeed they have gone on, with nothing to interrupt their harmony and good understanding, because the points of contact are few and exposed to few difficulties. Such is our condition with respect to Austria, which has but one port (that of Trieste) where we have any commerce worthy of the name, the annual value of which I find is about \$1,700,000. The ancient Queen of the Adriatic still looks out upon the waters; but she is herself a melancholy spectacle—her prosperity having departed with her independence. The iron rule of Austria has left to Venice little but the remembrance of her former magnificence, and the oppressive sense of her present degradation. But in these ports, and wherever else, if anywhere, they may be necessary, consuls would perform the commercial functions—their positions not being at all affected by any change of diplomatic relations short of a state of war.

I do not pretend, by this glance at our intercourse with Austria, that I propose this measure on the ground that an American representative is unnecessary at the court of Vienna. I trust, if we carry it to its practical result, that we shall be influenced by much higher considerations than that. I allude to this topic merely to show that a great act of national duty may be performed without the sacrifice of any national interest whatever.

Nor does the interruption of diplomatic intercourse give any just cause of offence. There is no obligation to establish or to continue it. Either is a mere question of courtesy or convenience; and a considerable portion of the missions of Europe are maintained from feelings of comity, arising out of the affinity of kindred governments, and of an indisposition to exhibit what is there considered a mark of disrespect for a court, how-

ever limited the sphere of its authority, by excluding it from the family of sovereigns associated by diplomatic representations. The eighteenth century was prolific in the personal memoirs of active diplomatists; and no American can peruse them without being amazed at the utter insignificance of the various topics which engaged their attention, and which were swelled into consequence by the passions and interests of the retainers of corrupt courts. They are subjects beneath contempt; and their influence upon the fate of nations is buried with the men who gave them a factitious importance. He who rises from the perusal of one of these records of human follies can no longer wonder at the remark of a Swedish statesman, that it took very little wisdom to govern the world—as the world was then governed.

But, sir, while I maintain that the cessation of diplomatic intercourse with Austria would give the Government of that country no just cause of offence, I do not seek to deny or conceal that the motives for the adoption of this measure will be unacceptable and peculiarly obnoxious to the feelings of a Power proverbially haughty in the days of its prosperity, and rendered more susceptible by recent events, which have destroyed much of its ancient prestige, and compelled it to call for Russian aid in the perilous circumstances where the noble efforts of Hungary to assert her just rights had placed the oppressor. On the contrary, the course I propose would lose half its value, were any doubts to rest upon the motives that dictate it.

And certainly, were they not open to the day, I should not look for that cordial approbation which I now anticipate from the American people for this first effort to rebuke, by public opinion expressed through an established government, in the name of a great republic, atrocious acts of despotism, by which human liberty and life have been sacrificed, under circumstances of audacious contempt for the rights of mankind and the sentiments of the civilized world, without a parallel even in this age of warfare between the oppressors and the oppressed. I say this first effort; for, though the principle of public disapprobation in situations not very dissimilar may be traced in the proceedings of at least one of the representative bodies of Europe, I do not recollect that any formal act has been adopted rendering the censure more signal and enduring. If we take the first step in this noble cause, where physical force, with its flagitious abuse, if not conquered, may be ultimately restrained by moral considerations, we shall add to the value of the lesson of 1776, already so important to the world, and destined to become far more so, by furnishing one guarantee the more for the preservation of human rights where they exist, and for their recovery where they are lost.

Mr. President, I do not mistake the true position of my country, nor do I seek to exaggerate her importance by these suggestions. I am perfectly aware that, whatever we may do or say, the immediate march of Austria will be onward in the course of despotism, with a step feebler or firmer, as resistance may appear near or remote, till she is stayed by one of those upheavings of the people, which is as sure to come as that man longs for freedom, and longs to strike the blow which shall make it his.

Pride is blind, and power tenacious; and Aus-

trian pride and power, though they may quail before the signs of the times—before barricades and fraternization, by which streets are made fortresses and armies revolutionists, new and mighty engines in popular warfare—will hold out in their citadel till the last extremity. But many old things are passing away; and Austrian despotism will pass away in its turn. Its bulwarks will be shaken by the rushing of mighty winds—by the voice of the world, wherever its indignant expression is not restrained by the kindred sympathies of arbitrary power.

I desire, sir, not to be misunderstood. I do not mean that in all the revolutionary struggles which political contests bring on, it would be expedient for other Governments to express their feelings of interest or sympathy. I think they should not; for there are obvious considerations which forbid such action, and the value of this kind of moral interposition would be diminished by its too frequent recurrence. It should be reserved for great events—events marked by great crimes and oppressions on the one side, and great exertions and misfortunes on the other, and under circumstances which carry with them the sympathies of the world, like the partition of Poland and the subjugation of Hungary. We can offer public congratulations, as we have done, to people crowned by success in their struggle for freedom. We can offer our recognition of their independence to others, as we have done, while yet the effort was pending. Have we sympathy only for the fortunate? Or is a cause less sacred or less dear because it is prostrated in the dust by the foot of power? Let the noble sentiments of Washington, in his spirit-stirring reply to the French minister, answer these questions: "Born, sir, in a land of liberty; having early learned to estimate its value; having, in a word, devoted the best years of my life to its maintenance, I rejoice whenever in any country I see a nation unfold the banner of freedom. To call your nation brave, were but common praise. Wonderful people! Ages to come will read with astonishment the history of your exploits."

I freely confess that I shall hail the day with pleasure when this Government, reflecting the true sentiments of the people, shall express its sympathy for struggling millions, seeking, in circumstances of peril and oppression, that liberty which was given to them by God, but has been wrested from them by man. I do not see any danger to the true independence of nations by such a course; and indeed I am by no means certain that the free interchange of public views in this solemn manner would not go far towards checking the progress of oppression and the tendency to war. Why, sir, the very discussion in high places and free places—and here is one of them—even when discussion is followed by no act, is itself a great element of retributive justice to punish when an atrocious deed is done, and a great element of moral power to restrain it when such a deed is contemplated. I claim for our country no exemption from the decrees of these high tribunals; and when we are guilty of a tithe of the oppression and cruelty which have made the Austrian name a name of reproach through the world, I hope we shall receive, as we shall well merit, the opprobrium of mankind.

I anticipate with confidence the cordial support

of the distinguished Senator from Kentucky in this effort. I will not doubt it; though I am afraid, from a somewhat playful remark he made the other day, that he is a more zealous disciple of the stand still school than he was some years since, when he proved himself the noble advocate of South American and of Grecian freedom. I have just renewed my recollection of what the honorable Senator said and did upon those memorable occasions; though, indeed, both the one and the other were deeply imprinted upon my memory, as they are yet upon the hearts of his countrymen. Among the many splendid efforts, both as an orator and statesman, by which he will go down to posterity honored and applauded, there are none higher or holier than these:

"I have no commiseration, for princes," was his characteristic declaration. "My sympathies are reserved for the great mass of mankind." "Self-government is the natural government of man."

"It ought to animate us," he said upon another occasion, "to desire the redemption of the minds and bodies of unborn millions from the brutalizing effects of a system whose tendency is to stifle the faculties of the soul, and to degrade man to the level of beasts."

"Everywhere," he says at another time, "the interest in the Grecian cause is felt with the deepest intensity, expressed in every form, and increases with every new day and passing hour;" and he puts an emphatic question emphatically, which I repeat to him, and to every one, if there is any one who hesitates to keep "on a line," as Mr. Canning said, with the opinions of his countrymen: "And are the representatives of the people alone to be insulated from the common moral atmosphere of the world?" These sentiments have no connection with the recognition of independence, nor is their expression claimed as the right or the consequence of a mere political act. They belong to man, wherever he may be placed.

The honorable Senator describes in burning words the cruelties of Spanish and Turkish warfare; and in Murillo we have the very prototype of Haynau, and recent Austrian enormities may be read in the enormities powerfully portrayed almost thirty years ago; and this apostrophe comes to close the recapitulation: "Are we so mean, so base, so despicable, that we may not attempt to express our horror and our indignation at the most brutal and atrocious war that ever stained the earth or shocked high Heaven?"

And I am happy, also, to anticipate the cordial coöperation of the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts, who, upon a recent occasion, expressed his sympathy for down-trodden Hungary, and his abhorrence of despotic sway, in a strain of indignant eloquence, which would have done honor to the elder Pitt, in the brightest days of his intellect. "We have had all our sympathies much interested," he truly said, "in the Hungarian effort for liberty. We have all wept at its failure. We thought we saw a more rational hope of establishing independence in Hungary than in any other part of Europe where the question has been in agitation within the last twelve months; but despotic power from abroad has intervened to suppress it."

And the honorable Senator, in scathing terms, which will touch a cord in the hearts of all his

countrymen, rebukes the Russian Emperor for his insolent demand of the fugitives who had sought refuge within the Turkish frontier:

"Gentlemen, (he says,) there is something on earth greater than arbitrary or despotic power. The lightning has its power; and the whirlwind has its power; and the earthquake has its power; but there is something among men more capable of shaking despotic power than lightning, whirlwind, or earthquake. That is the threatened indignation of the whole civilized world."

"The whole world will be the tribunal to try him, [the Russian Emperor,] and he must appear before it, and hold up his hand and plead, and abide its judgment."

"Nor let him, nor let any one imagine, that mere force can subdue the general sentiment of mankind; it is much more likely to extend that sentiment, and to destroy that power which he most desires to establish and secure."

"And now, gentlemen, let us do our part; let us understand the position in which we stand, as the great Republic of the world, at the most interesting era of the world; let us consider the mission and the destiny which Providence seems to have designed us for; and let us take care of our own conduct, that, with irreproachable hands and hearts, void of offence, we may stand up, whenever and wherever called upon, and, with a voice not to be disregarded, say, This shall not be done—at least not without our protest."

These were noble words, and nobly spoken; and he who does not feel his blood course more rapidly through his veins as he reads them, has little in common with the freemen of this broad land. Well was the honorable Senator saluted with "tremendous cheerings," for he spoke to the hearts of his auditors when he said: "For my part, at this moment, I feel more indignant at recent events connected with Hungary than at all those which have passed in her struggle for liberty. I see that the Emperor of Russia demands of Turkey that the noble Kossuth and his companions shall be given up, and I see that this demand is made in derision of the law of nations."

Here comes another episode in the story of this flagitious abuse of power. Kossuth, the Washington of Hungary, is one of those men whose great qualities are brought out by perilous times. He learned to hate oppression in an Austrian dungeon, where, while he lost his health, he learned also to prize the value of liberty, and in the solitude of his cell to devote himself to her cause; and nobly did he fulfill his mission, till domestic treachery and Russian power prostrated the hopes of freedom, and he was driven to seek shelter from the vengeance of Christian Powers within the dominion of the successor of the impostor of Mecca. And then was exhibited that contemptuous disregard of the feelings of the world, so powerfully described by the Senator from Massachusetts, in the demand upon an independent nation that the expatriated leader, with his little band of faithful followers, should be surrendered to the enemies of his country, a holocaust upon the altar of despotism. The civilized world watched with anxious suspense the progress and issue of this demand—as insolent as it was wicked—upon the Turkish Government. It is twelve years since I saw the present Sultan, then a lad, sitting by the side of his father, the great Osmanli reformer, crossing the Bosphorus in a splendid caique, surrounded with all the imposing pageantry of Eastern magnificence. Little did I then anticipate that the lovers of freedom through the world would ever look to the heir of the Othmans to save Christian patriots from the fangs of Christian monarchs. We do not know the threats that were menaced, nor the inducements offered; but both the one and the other were no doubt proportioned to the intensity of the passions

to be gladdened by the surrender of the victims. But the effort was vain. The Divan, faithful to the traditions of Eastern hospitality, if not to the obligations of the law of nations, firmly refused the delivery of the fugitives, and thus spared another "deluge of blood," to use the words of the great Roman historian, in this sad drama of a nation's overthrow. The latest accounts we have from the East inform us that this extraordinary contest between Russian arrogance and Turkish inflexibility was yet going on with no prospect of an amicable solution of the question; and this wanton violation of the most sacred rights may yet furnish a pretext for the march of another Russian army, and of another attempt to drive the Turks from Europe, and to seize Constantinople. The Mahometan has shown himself a better Christian than the Russian, and has won the approbation of an enlightened age. Success be with him in such a warfare!

But, sir, with their powerful sympathies for human suffering, the people of this country, though ardently attached to the principles of rational liberty, are no political propagandists. They do not undertake to judge what forms of government are best adapted to the condition of the other nations of the earth, and, least of all, to attempt the establishment elsewhere of their own. To maintain that practical freedom cannot be enjoyed under a constitutional monarchy, would be to contradict our own observation and the experience of some of the most enlightened nations of the earth. We know that a republic is best for us, and therefore we have it. Let those who believe that a constitutional monarchy is best for them enjoy it, without the dictation of any other Power. But between governments like these, and the despotism which overshadows, overwhelms, I may say, some of the fairest portions of the Old World—where power is the only rule of right for the governors, and obedience the only resource for the governed—there is a difference as marked and as wide as is the difference in their effects upon the character, and progress, and prosperity of man. The former, when they fulfill their legitimate duties, commend themselves to our good wishes and respect. There is no American, true to the political faith of our fathers, who does not sincerely desire the renovation of the latter, and the restoration of the oppressed masses to the rights and dignity of human nature.

Here is an empire of freemen, separated by the broad Atlantic from the contests of force and opinion, which seem to succeed each other like the waves of the ocean in the mighty changes going on in Europe—twenty millions of people enjoying a measure of prosperity which God, in his providence, has granted to no other nation of the earth. With no interest to warp their judgment; with neither prejudice nor animosity to excite them; and with a public opinion as free as the air they breathe, they can survey these events as dispassionately as is compatible with that natural sympathy for the oppressed which is implanted in the human breast. Think you not, sir, that their voice, sent from these distant shores, would cheer the unfortunate onward in their work—would encourage them while bearing their evils to bear them bravely as men who hope—and when driven to resist by a pressure no longer to be borne, to exert themselves as men who peril all upon the effort? But where no demonstration of interest on the

part of a government is called for by circumstances, a sound public opinion is ready to proclaim its sentiments, and no reserve is imposed upon their expression. It is common to this country, and to every country where liberal institutions prevail, and it is as powerful and as powerfully exerted in France and in England as in the United States. Its effects may not be immediate or immediately visible. But they are sure to come, and to come in power. Its voice is louder than the booming of cannon; and it is heard on the very confines of civilization. Our declaration of independence has laid the foundation of mightier changes in the world than any event since the spirit of the Crusades precipitated Europe upon Asia with zealous but mistaken views of religious duty.

The very last packet has brought us the London Times of December 7, which contains an address to Lord John Russell and to Lord Palmerston from eighty-three members of the English Houses of Lords and Commons, requesting the interference of the British Government to endeavor to restrain that of Austria from further butchery; for that, in plain words, is the design of the movement. I beg leave to read this paper, which, though drawn with some reserve, the better probably to attain the object, leaves no doubt of the opinion of the signers respecting the condition of Hungary and the character of the events which placed her there:

"We, the undersigned, desire to express to your Lordships and through your Lordships to the rest of her Majesty's confidential servants, the deep interest which we have taken in the contest which has been recently carried on between the Hungarian nation and the Emperor of Austria. Not less deep is the interest which we now take in the final settlement of the question at issue between them, and in the permanent pacification of that great country. Sincerely attached to the liberties of our own country, the final establishment of which is due to the successful termination of struggles analogous to those which have been made from time to time in Hungary—with equal sincerity desirous of maintaining the peace of Europe—we are fully sensible of the great importance that the settlement of the questions at issue should be effected in a manner and upon terms satisfactory to the Hungarian nation, not only for the sake of Hungary herself, but because we apprehend that a settlement unsatisfactory to the country will sow the seed of renewed discontent, may lead to fresh local disturbances, and, by the local disturbance of so large an element of the European system, may endanger the tranquillity of the whole.

"The objects of the undersigned are, internal liberty, national independence, European peace. For the attainment of these objects, we trust the court of Vienna will bear in mind that the satisfaction and contentment of Hungary will afford the greatest security. Considering, however, the means by which the authority of the House of Hapsburg has been re-established, the undersigned are of opinion that the occasion permits, even if it does not call for, the intervention of Great Britain in counselling the Austrian Government respecting the exercise of its restored executive power. With respect to the mode and opportunity of interfering, the undersigned offer no specific opinion; but we hope that her Majesty's Government will not shrink from suggesting to that of Austria, that, since republican France has abolished capital punishment for political offences, it will not be wise to allow a contrast to be drawn unfavorable to the clemency of monarchical governments."

[Signed by 83 members, Peers and Commons.]

The allusion "*to the means by which the authority of the House of Hapsburg has been re-established,*" and to the occasion, if not the duty of intervention by Great Britain, is significant enough of the deep feeling of indignation at the cruelties of the Austrian Government, and of the anxiety among the English people that they should be prevented. We also desire the same result for the future; but we believe that that result would be best attained by the world's censure of the past.

What then, sir, are the circumstances in the conduct of the Austrian Government which have brought down upon it the reprobation of the civilized world? The history of the Hungarian effort, and its deplorable result, are too recent and widespread, and have awakened too deep an interest in our whole country, to render a detailed review necessary upon this occasion. I shall merely glance at some of the more prominent facts, but enough to give the true character of one of the most atrocious political acts of modern times.

Hungary was an independent nation, having no political connection at all with Austria, except in the person of the sovereign who was common to both. The reigning Austrian family was called to the Hungarian throne by election, some three centuries ago; and we are told by a standard review—a high and neutral authority—that “the pedigree of their immunities, during that long space, continued unimpaired.” The compact between the Hungarian people and their monarch declares that “Hungary is a country free and independent in her entire system of legislation and government; that she is not subject to any other people, or any other State; but that she should have her own separate existence and her own constitution, and should be governed by kings crowned according to her national laws and customs.” This article the Austrian Emperor swore to preserve, as all his predecessors had done; and as late as the 11th of April, 1848, he solemnly renewed his adhesion to it, with the guarantee of a ministry, responsible to the Diet—that plan, of English origin, by which European liberal politicians seek to reconcile the dogma of the personal independence of the sovereign with the direction of public affairs in conformity with the will of the nation. This was the constitution of Hungary, and thus was it secured. It guaranteed national independence, Hungarian laws and officers, and Hungarian administration of the affairs of the country. In these days of the violation of the most sacred rights, there has been no violation more signal or atrocious than the annihilation of the rights of this high-spirited people, once the bulwark of Christendom. A *charte octroyée*, the work of an Austrian cabinet, struck down their liberties at one stroke, and left them (as a kindred expedient—kindred in its objects though not in its form—left our fathers) no choice but submission or resistance.

These *chartes octroyées* are becoming quite fashionable in the world of arbitrary power, awakened from its long slumber by the thunder of popular indignation, and particularly since the restoration of the Bourbons—that family which was the very impersonation of the doctrine of the divine right of kings; and they mark significantly the utter contempt for the sovereignty of the people, which is engraven upon the hearts of all the lovers of the good old times, when there were but two classes in the world—those born to govern, and those born to be governed. We first heard of them as the foundation of national freedom, when the declaration of rights proposed by the provisional government of France, on the overthrow of Napoleon, was presented to Louis XVIII. for his solemn adhesion. He rejected this act of popular power, holding on to his *divine right*; but as the restoration would have been placed in hazard without some security for the

liberties of the French people, this plan of a *charte octroyée* was resorted to—a charter granted by the sovereign, emanating from his gracious benevolence, and giving to the nation certain rights, not because it was entitled to claim them, but because he was kindly disposed to limit his own hereditary authority, and to allow his beloved people to be a little less oppressed than they had been in the good old days of arbitrary power. And this is a *charte octroyée*, by which, when the fears of kings prompt them to make concessions to popular movements, their *divine right* is reserved for future use, and the sovereignty of the people practically rebuked and denied. The lesson was too precious to be lost, and Prussia and other States have followed the example; and human rights are *octroyées*, given, *doled out*, as the fears or caprice of a single man may dictate.

Well, sir, the Austrian ministry was seized with a passion for political unity; by which, at the sacrifice of all those feelings—prejudices, if you please—the growth of centuries, which separated the various races bound by ties feebler or stronger to the monarchy, they were to become one people, homogeneous in nothing but in an imperial decree. A *charte octroyée* was got up for the occasion, and by a kind of political legerdemain—if not as dexterous, at least as rapid as the feats of the necromancer—all the traits of nationality, cherished by the associated members of the monarchy, were swept away, and they all became Austrians by this act of arbitrary power, as offensive to their pride as it was subversive of their rights. Hungary was to disappear from the map of independent nations, and all its institutions were placed at the mercy of a foreign court; and while the empty form of a kind of representation was given to her, in a jarring assembly, divided by language, races, and interests, all substantial power was reserved to the Emperor and his cabinet.

But Kossuth has himself depicted the condition of his country in words of truth and power, which appeal to every heart:

“Nothing but the most revolting treachery, the most tyrannical oppression, and cruelties unheard of in the words of history—nothing but the infernal doom of annihilation to her national existence, preserved through a thousand years, through adversities so numerous, were able to arouse her to resist the fatal stroke, aimed at her very life, to enable her to repulse the tyrannical assaults of the ungrateful Hapsburgs, or accept the struggle for life, honor, and liberty, forced upon her.”

She did accept it, and the Hungarian people rose as one man to resist these gross aggressions; and their gallant exertions would, in all probability, have been crowned by success, had not the common sympathy of despotism brought a new enemy into the field. The Russian scented the blood from afar, and Hungary fell, like Poland, before the Cossack and the Pandour—an everlasting reproach to the contemners of the laws of God and man, who accomplished these nefarious schemes.

The issue was made known to the Czar by his general, in a dispatch whose brevity Sparta might have envied: “Hungary lies at the feet of your Majesty.” Memorable words, and to be remembered in all future time! The foot of one man upon ten millions of people! Imperial arrogance can go no further. He who does not instinctively and indignantly scorn such pretensions would have opposed the Declaration of Independence on this

side of the water, and the great charter of King John on the other.

I have presented this brief review of Hungarian rights and wrongs, not as the direct motive for the adoption of this resolution—that I choose to put upon another ground, the ground of atrocious cruelty—but because I desire to take from Austrian advocates (if there are any in this country—I know there are none in this Senate) the last excuse for these violations of the common feelings of our nature, by showing that the attack upon Hungarian independence was as reckless and unjustifiable as were the cruelties inflicted upon the Hungarian people.

After the political catastrophe came the catastrophe of vengeance, still more afflicting to humanity. The love of power being gratified, the love of revenge claimed its hour of triumph; and well did it enjoy it. The world, in the darkest period of its history, has rarely witnessed such scenes of gratuitous cruelty as marked the establishment of Austrian supremacy over unhappy Hungary. The moral tendencies of the age are to check the effusion of blood; to stop these judicial murders for political offences, so styled—often, indeed, as in this case, the efforts of true and tried patriots—men who do honor to our common nature by their noble qualities—to secure the blessings of freedom to their country. It is honorable to France and England that political martyrs are no longer considered by public opinion as vile malefactors; and I believe not a drop of blood has been shed in either country for offences of this kind during a period of many years. But the Austrian code, in principle and practice, out-Dracos Draco; and Jeffries himself loses half his claim to infamous distinction, when placed in competition with Austrian judges and generals.

I am not going to spread before you a map of these enormities. They have resounded through both hemispheres for many months. I shall merely glance at a few general facts, that the true character of Austrian supremacy may be justly appreciated.

Let the patriot leader himself speak. In his letter to Lord Palmerston, after crossing the Turkish frontier, and when he feared the Porte would yield to the menaces of Russia, and while refusing to save his life by becoming a renegade to his religion, he makes this powerful appeal:

"Time presses. Our doom may in a few days be sealed. Allow me to make an humble personal request. I am a man, my Lord, prepared to face the worst; and I can die with a free look at Heaven, as I have lived. But I am also a husband, son, and father. My poor, true-hearted wife, my children, and my noble old mother, are wandering about Hungary. They will probably soon fall into the hands of those Austrians, who delight in torturing even feeble women, and with whom the innocence of childhood is no protection against persecution. I conjure your Excellency, in the name of the Most High, to put a stop to these cruelties by your powerful mediation, and especially to accord to my wife and children an asylum on the soil of the generous English people."

"As to my people—my loved and noble country—must she perish forever? Shall she, unaided and unencouraged, be abandoned to annihilation by her tyrants?"

"God's will be done. I am prepared to die." * * *

"Once governor of a generous people, I leave no heritage to my children. They shall at least have an unculled name."

We are told that "many of the towns which are marked on the map have ceased to exist"—some of these with twenty or thirty thousand inhabitants. I can afford but one extract for the deeds of the

Austrian butcher, better known by that epithet than by the name of Haynau; but that distinction would have given him power and place under Nero:

"Haynau put thirteen Hungarian peasants to the rack, one after the other, to force them to tell the truth concerning an apparently fortified town."

They all met death, true to their country.

I had taken a memorandum of the letter of a Hungarian lady, who was flogged in a public square after her husband had committed suicide and her son been compelled to enter as a soldier into the Austrian army; but I forbear, having no pleasure in this retrospection of human suffering.

Even the Cologne Gazette, subject to Prussian censors, when alluding to the terrible scenes at Arad, and while speaking with reserve, sufficiently indicates its sentiments. It says: "We pass over the ground of these capital sentences. They are the same as those assigned by the Austrian courts-martial."

Martyrs and victims, there were noble examples among them of firmness and patriotism, which will illustrate the pages of Hungarian history in all time to come. Prominent among these was Bathlyani, revered through Hungary, and who was condemned by an Austrian court to the punishment of death. Previous to the revolution he had held a high office, which he resigned; and he was sentenced "for loosing the ties between Hungary and the Imperial Royal States," and "for having entered the army of the enemy." Rome—I mean ancient Rome—would have decreed him an ovation: Austria sent him to the scaffold! True to the instincts of his nature, his country was at his heart, and her name upon his lips, as death closed the scene of Austrian vengeance. "My country forever" were the last words he uttered.

Now, sir, I say it without reserve, that a Power thus setting at defiance the opinion of the world, and violating the best feelings of our nature, in the very wantonness of successful cruelty, has no bond of union with the American people. The sooner the diplomatic intercourse is dissolved—and dissolved with marks of indignant reprobation—the sooner shall we perform an act of public duty, which, at home and abroad, will meet with feelings of kindred sympathy from all, wherever they may be, who are not fit subjects for the tender mercies of Austrian power.

I have already said that at least one representative body in Europe had pursued a course not very dissimilar to this, in order to mark with their disapprobation a palpable violation of national rights, under circumstances of peculiar injustice, originating in the basest cupidity. It was the Chamber of Deputies of France, which, to their honor, year after year condemned the last partition, by which the remnant of Poland—all that was left of the land of Sobieski and Kosciuszko—was broken into provinces, and seized by the same triple combination, doomed to infamy by the first division of that unfortunate kingdom. The answer to the King's speech was the occasion usually taken by the Chamber to express their opinion upon grave questions of policy, foreign and domestic; and for some years, during the reign of Louis Philippe, a reproof was thus annually administered to the royal spoilers—a reproof which excited much sensation in Europe, and was known to give much offence to the high personages thus arraigned at the bar of public opinion. I believe that, for some

time, this free expression of condemnation by the Chamber, if it did not interrupt, rendered very precarious the diplomatic relations between France and Russia; which latter Power seemed to be peculiarly sensitive to these rebukes for the adoption of this truly Muscovite process of national aggrandizement. One of these paragraphs—that in the address of January, 1840—I will here introduce, not only on account of the proper sentiments it contains, but to show that the Chamber felt free to censure a great act of injustice, in terms not less forcible than just:

"In all the questions which divide the world, France invokes but justice; she demands only the respect due to all rights. Can she cease to recall to Europe those of the ancient Polish nation, and the guarantees that repeated treaties gave to a generous people, whose misfortunes time seems only to aggravate?"

I am gratified at being able to refer to this example of representative firmness; and though I do not seek to disguise that our action—if we act at all—will extend the principle further than it was carried in France, still the feeling of national sympathy for national wrongs was at the foundation of the movement there, as it will be here. We have many good men among us, who are alarmed at any proposition for public action, unless the very same thing has been done here or elsewhere. If the case is not in the books, no remedy can be applied, however imperious the circumstances. They have an instinctive dread of progress, believing that what has been done has been well done, and ought to be done again, and that nothing else should be done.

This *spirit of standing still*—conservatism, I believe, is the fashionable name for it in England, and is becoming so here, while both the moral and physical world is giving evidence that change is one of the great laws of nature—little becomes a country like ours, which is advancing in the career of improvement with an accelerated pace unknown in the history of the world.

Standing still! Why, sir, you might as well attempt to follow the example of the Jewish leader, and say to the sun, "Stand thou still upon Gibeon, and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon," and expect to be obeyed, as to expect that this country would yield to this sentiment of immobility, and stand still in that mighty work of improvement, material and intellectual, which it has been doing for generations, and will be called upon to do for generations yet to come.

Let not the timid be alarmed; where there is free inquiry, there is no danger. There is a fund of practical good sense, as well as a deep moral and religious feeling, in the people of this country, which will hold on to our institutions, not with blind tenacity, but with a firm resolution to maintain them; and, while wisely admitting improvement, rejecting impracticable and dangerous projects, often originating in honest though mistaken views. Let us not fear the progress of opinion. The world is probably yet very far from its extreme point of improvement. Before that is reached, many a project will be proposed and rejected; many an experiment tried and failed; and a spirit of investigation will be abroad, dangerous only when met by force, instead of argument.

I am not going to reason with this feeling, which would have enjoined upon our fathers to stand still and suffer, instead of rushing into the danger of a revolution, not only because *I am sure it is not*

a senatorial one, but because it is entrenched behind barriers which reason cannot overcome. To such, *not here*, but elsewhere, the example of the French Chamber may divest this proposition of half its terrors. The other half may be safely left to time. They will gradually learn that the great political truth of our day is contained in the sentiment recently announced by the distinguished Senator from Massachusetts—"We are in an age of progress."

And the eloquent remarks of Mr. Canning, when placed in circumstances bearing some resemblance to ours, may lessen apprehension among those—and there are many of them in this country—who believe that no good can come out of our American Nazareth, but that what comes from England is best and wisest.

"Those persons," said that distinguished man, and in a similar spirit with that displayed by the Senator from Kentucky, almost at the same time, and while taking a kindred course, "seem to me to imagine that, under no possible circumstances, can an honest man endeavor to keep his country upon a line with the progress of political knowledge, and to adapt its course to the varying circumstances of the world. Such an attempt is branded as an indication of mischievous intentions." He recommends "the pressing of generous and noble sentiments into the service of his country."

Too much caution is not wisdom, though rashness may be folly. He who does not *keep himself upon the line of knowledge* will soon find the world ahead of him, and that his associations belong to a past generation.

If there are any here so fastidious as to desire plain truths to be disguised by "honeyed words," and who are disposed to arraign the freedom of debate upon this occasion, I recommend them to go back and learn wisdom from the discussions in the English House of Commons and in our own Congress, and especially to take a lesson in the etiquette of political debate, where human rights are in question, from Brougham and Clay—I use these names historically—those masters of the power of scathing rebuke.

Mr. President, there is one topic I desire briefly to touch. In the allusions I have seen in many of the papers, and in conversations I have heard here respecting this subject, the name and personal claims of the gentleman who has recently departed upon a mission to Austria have been brought into question, as though they had some necessary connection with the object of this resolution. I trust, sir, that these views will not be entertained here. The measure proposed is wholly independent of such personal considerations, and had we a minister at Vienna, equal in character and experience to Franklin or Jefferson, it ought not to change, in the slightest degree, the course of our action. This proposition is of a far higher nature than any question of personal qualifications. Let not its importance be affected by any such considerations.

But, sir, I owe it to the relations subsisting between that gentleman and myself thus publicly to say, that if I were called upon to give my vote upon his nomination, divested of all questions but his personal fitness for the office, that vote would be given in his favor. I have known him since his boyhood; and mutual regard and kindness have always subsisted between us. I consider him

fully competent to discharge the duties of a foreign mission; and I do him this act of justice because he is absent, and exposed to severe censure, and because, as a political opponent, I may thus speak of him, without any danger of being misunderstood. But, sir, while I say this, I shall say also, and with equal truth, that his departure from the United States on the very eve of the meeting of the Senate interposes, in my opinion, insurmountable objections to his confirmation. Whether a foreign minister should ever go abroad upon a mere executive appointment, unless in rare cases of public urgency, may well admit of doubt. I do not say this as a party man, because I know full well that no such reserve has recently been imposed upon these appointments by any administration. But as the session of the Senate approaches, the procedure becomes the more improper, and utterly indefensible when it occurs upon the very eve of its commencement. I saw a

paragraph in one of the city papers, only three or four days ago, stating that a distinguished citizen, for whom I have much personal respect, had left Kentucky on the 22d of December to proceed upon a mission to Mexico. He will never receive my vote to remain there. I do not understand this unseemly haste—this flight from the judgment of the Senate, as though confirmation were rendered necessary by the public expense thus incurred, and a sort of obligation consequently imposed upon this depository of a portion of the executive power to conform its action to the action of the President. I trust that no such motives will influence our conduct; but that we shall take a course which, while it asserts the rights of the country, will restore to the Senate its efficient control, and will yield nothing—I will not say to the cupidity, but I will say to the earnest desire of office, which was never more powerful nor more powerfully displayed than now.

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